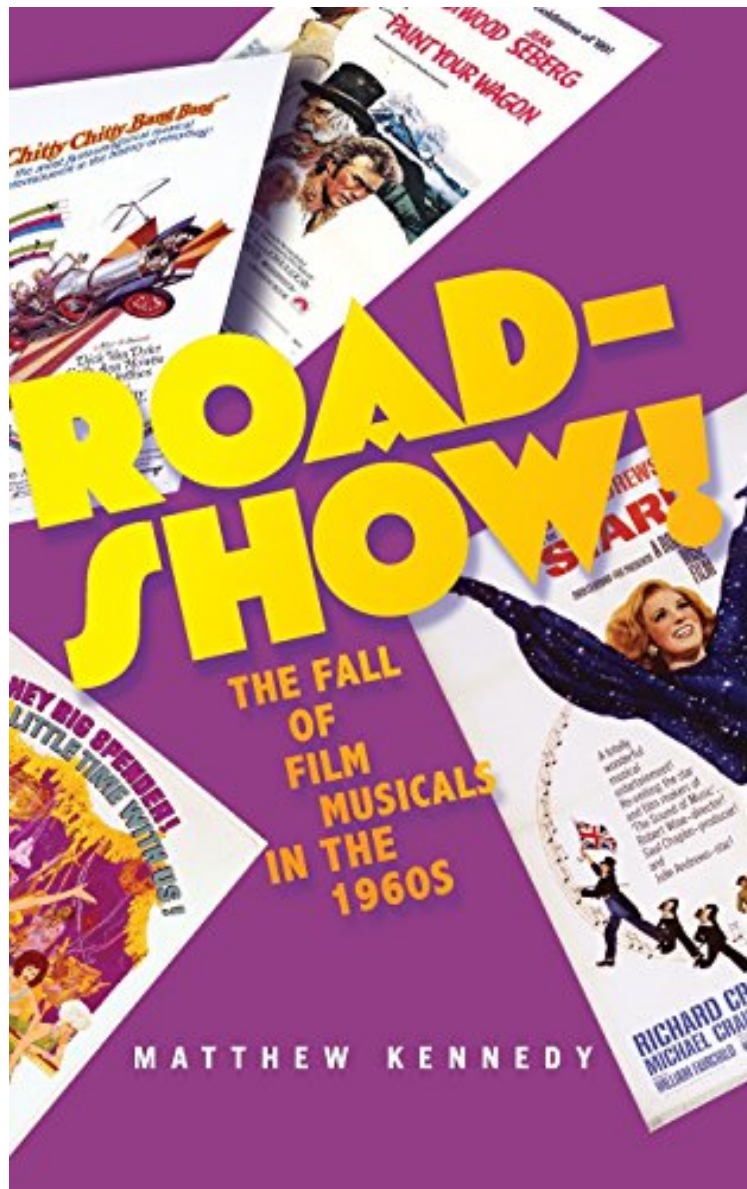


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Roadshow!: The Fall of Film Musicals in the 1960s

Matthew Kennedy

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#963743 in Books 2014-01-02Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 6.50 x 1.20 x 9.40l, 1.30 #File Name: 0199925674320 pages | File size: 74.Mb

Matthew Kennedy : Roadshow!: The Fall of Film Musicals in the 1960s before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Roadshow!: The Fall of Film Musicals in the 1960s:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Runaway expenses, foolish casting, and the collapse of the studio system produced white elephant musicals between 1965 and 1972By Stephen O. MurrayI originally planned to read

only about a few of the roadshow musicals Matthew Kennedy discusses in "Roadshow: The Fall of Film Musicals in the 1960s," but, after reading a few, went to the beginning and read the book straight through. I learned a lot, even if I was just fine with much of that. Like many other writers about the Sixties, Kennedy's focus is on the late-1960s (after the profitable *My Fair Lady* and *Mary Poppins* in 1964 and the blockbuster success of *The Sound of Music* in 1965) and into the early-1970s. One of the 21 roadshow musicals, *Fiddler on the Roof*, dates from 1971, and Bob Fosse, Liza Minnelli, and Joel Grey won Oscars for a (non-roadshow) musical in 1972. It is not that each big musical was a bigger money-loser than the one before, following the fatal path of finding a next *Sound of Music*. Among the surprises are that *Thoroughly Modern Millie* and *Song of Norway* turned profits during their initial theatrical releases. That the studio system was collapsing was both a cause for bad decisions and cost overruns of Broadway musicals and an effect of expensive failures (including some roadshows that were not musicals). Studio executives had long been casting stars without singing or dancing talents onto directors of musicals (see *When Broadway Went to Hollywood*), and seemingly valuing set design more than musical performance. (This is not to say that movies with leads who could sing were critical or commercial successes, e.g., *Hello, Dolly!* and *Star!*) Failure of many of these big investments is less surprising especially given information Kennedy relates is less mysterious than success especially the fatal success of *The Sound of Music*, not the greatest Rodgers and Hammerstein musical filmed by Hollywood studios it was fatal, or at least expensive, in attempts to catch and resell whatever magic was in it. Though *Julie Andrews* was for a time the biggest box-office actress in the world, two musical extravaganzas built around her were aborted, and the two that were carried to term sank like rocks. To me this shows that the fixation on stars was a misplaced priority of the money-men, as many projects budgets ballooned to levels where profit was an impossible dream (to borrow the title of a song from one of the failures, the dismal *Man of La Mancha*). Though the book is more about the business of movie-making (and publicizing) than about the art of cinema, what Kennedy writes analyzing the movies that were made and released is mostly impeccable. I like *The Matchmaker* more than he, but his diss of it is quite in passing. He makes me consider watching *Goodbye, Mr. Chips*, if it ever falls in my path. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. *Coulda Shoulda* By A. Film Lover Certainly a good idea for a book, but there is so much anecdotal evidence that simply is either made up, misremembered, untrue, or missing that after a while I just tuned out, I'm afraid. Certainly it's my kind of book, but it just didn't work for me. So, for me, kind of an "eh" book that should have and could have been better. His "reportage" of *Doctor Dolittle* doesn't even bother to mention that the film received cutting after its premiere in Hollywood - he mentions cuts made after previews, but those were not nearly as major as the cuts made post-premiere. It's also a problem when an author has undoubtedly chosen to write a book about a subject he has no first-hand experience with. I doubt he saw any of the big roadshows back in the 1960s - I did - every single one of them. But even calling this book *Roadshow* is weird because roadshows were not limited to musicals. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. *Raindrops on Roses* -- by the megaton By Snookie Handsome You might not think the collapse of the mammoth Hollywood musical would have the makings of a rich rewarding book, but "*Roadshow!*" Is itself a blockbuster, at least in terms of solid entertainment value if not in terms of tickets (or copies) sold. This show is a tour de force, however, for an author who may have a scholar's credentials but zero scholarly stuffiness. Mr Kennedy proves an insightful and sprightly eulogizer as he traces the collapse of the Big Fat Musical (marked by portentous presentation that in turn was marked, perhaps pock-marked, by inflated budgets and, usually, reserved-seat tickets at near-Broadway prices. Yes you purchased tickets days or weeks in advance and "dressed up" for the performance you attended, even tho the actors had long since deposited their pay checks and gone home. It was an attempt at turning a movie into an automatic event, and sometimes -- as with that definitive blockbuster "*The Sound of Music*" -- it worked smashingly to the satisfaction of audience and filmgoer alike. Sadly, the subgenre blew itself out, as producers attempted the transformation of musical after musical from pleasantly diversionary escapist lark into vulgar, bombastic, overreaching nuclear device. "*Sound of Music*" became the most imitated film of its time, even though the ingredients that made it a hit were very unlikely to be duplicated; how many movies can winningly mingle Nazis, nunneries, marionettes, ersatz-Viennese schmaltz, adorably trilling toddlers, stiff-upper-lip-locked romance and sweeping spectacle? Oh and one more novelty item: force-of-nature and super *Goody Two-shoes*, *Julie Andrews*? Kennedy makes his account of this definitive and epochal Hollywood folly not a lachrymose lament but a wisely witty funereal romp; he masterfully delineates each and every lesson that should have been learned but which, in wacky Hollywood style, wasn't. This book is one of the new century's most unlikely delights, and even though it's been gracing bookshelves for several years now, it's as freshly freaky as a crushed carnation. And funny. Very very funny.

Full-page newspaper ads announced the date. Reserved seats went on sale at premium prices. Audience members dressed up and arrived early to peruse the program during the overture that preceded the curtain's rise. And when the show began, it was--a rather disappointing film musical. In *Roadshow!*, film historian Matthew Kennedy tells the fascinating story of the downfall of the big-screen musical in the late 1960s. It is a tale of revolutionary cultural change, business transformation, and artistic missteps, all of which led to the obsolescence of the roadshow, a marketing extravaganza designed to make a movie opening in a regional city seem like a Broadway premier.

Ironically, the Hollywood musical suffered from unexpected success. Facing doom after its bygone heyday, it suddenly broke box-office records with three rapid-fire successes in 1964 and 1965: *Mary Poppins*, *My Fair Lady*, and *The Sound of Music*. Studios rushed to catch the wave, but everything went wrong. Kennedy takes readers inside the making of such movies as *Hello, Dolly!* and *Man of La Mancha*, showing how corporate management imposed financial pressures that led to poor artistic decisions—for example, the casting of established stars regardless of vocal or dancing talent (such as Clint Eastwood in *Paint Your Wagon*). And Kennedy explores the impact of profound social, political, and cultural change. The traditional-sounding *Camelot* and *Doctor Dolittle* were released in the same year as *Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, representing a vast gulf in taste. The artifice of musicals seemed outdated to baby boomers who grew up with the Cuban missile crisis, the Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. assassinations, race riots, and the Vietnam War. From *Julie Andrews* to *Barbra Streisand*, from *Fred Astaire* to *Rock Hudson*, *Roadshow!* offers a brilliant, gripping history of film musicals and their changing place in our culture.

.com A Look Inside: *Roadshow!*: The Fall of Film Musical in the 1960s [Click Images to Enlarge]